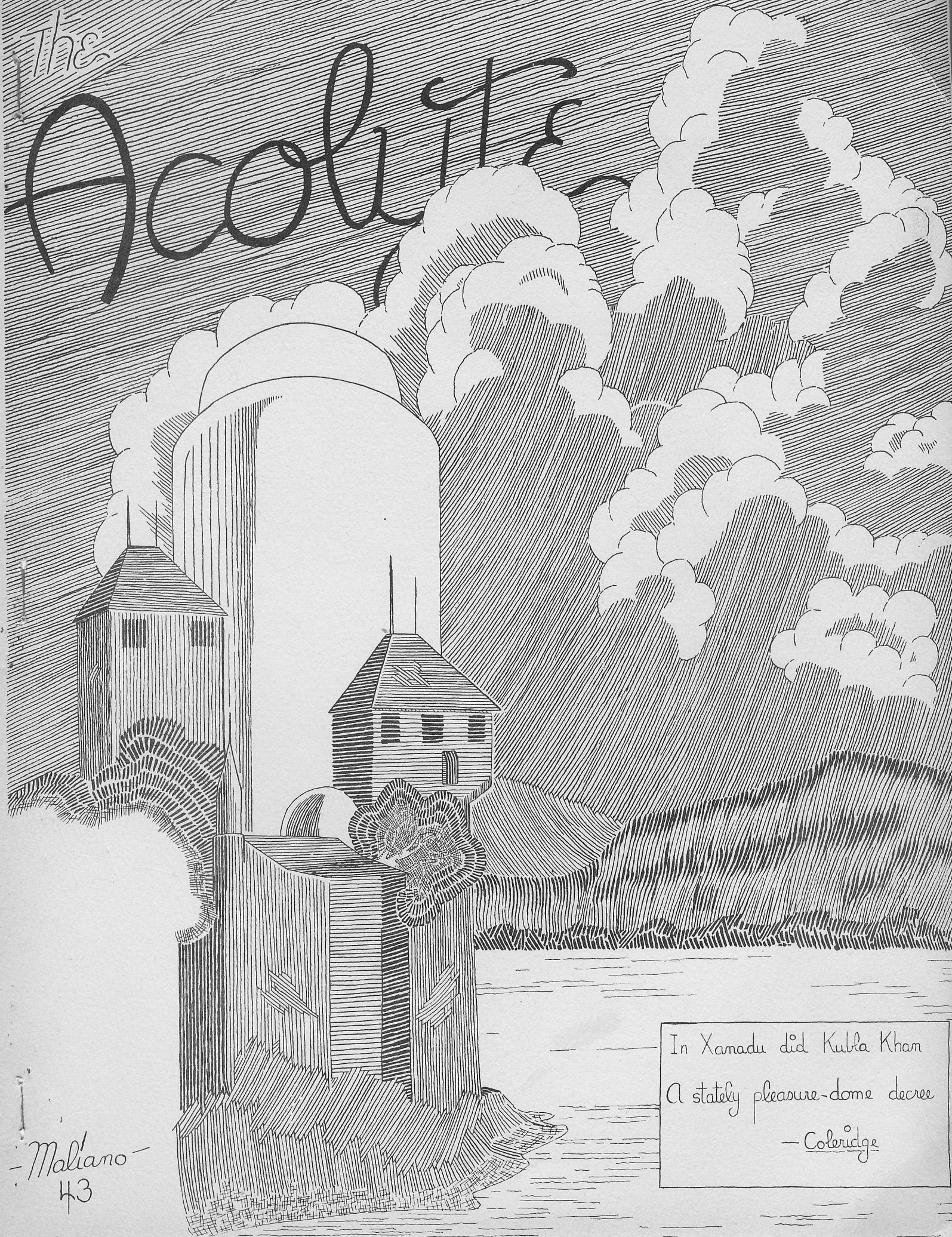


# The Ancient



-Maliano-  
43

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree  
— Coleridge

# THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND THE SUPERNATURAL  
(An Outsider Publication)

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-oOo-

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THIS ISSUE OF THE ACOLYTE IS DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF PAUL FREEHAFFER

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Maliano

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FRANCIS T. LANEY  
SAMUEL D. RUSSELL



## EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

"THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE..." This issue of The Acolyte marks still another reversal of editorial policy; the last, I hope, for some time. Samuel D. Russell, whom I consider to be one of the six or eight outstanding fantasy fans of all time, has joined The Acolyte as co-editor. In other words, this magazine is no longer mine--half of it is now Sam's. The immediate result of this is that The Acolyte can go back on its old quarterly schedule, with an eventual possibility of becoming a bi-monthly if conditions warrant. Over a period of time, we hope to develop this magazine into the literate periodical I have previously tried to create.

-----ooOoo-----

**SUBSCRIPTION POLICY.** In the previous issue, I mentioned a possible curtailment of circulation, and requested letters from the more interested subscribers. With the new co-editor to help on the mechanics of the magazine, this curtailment will not be necessary at present; however, those who wrote in are now being carried on a new "preferred list", and will be the last to be dropped in the event of any future retrenchment.....One policy change, however--in the future, starting with this issue, only one copy of this magazine will go to any one person. It has been brought to our attention that so-called "fan dealers" have been making more of a profit off sincere amateur efforts than we feel warranted; from now on, we shall handle our own back issues. To protect Acolyte contributors who may wish extra copies for certain of their friends, we shall be very happy to mail such copies for them if they request us to do so and furnish the necessary addresses. There will be no charge for this service.

-----ooOoo-----

**ACKERMANN IS A PLAGIARIST.** Henry Andrew Ackermann, a well-known fan author over a period of years and credited with several tales in pulp fantasy magazines, has been definitely proved a plagiarist in at least two of his published stories. Interested persons may wish to make the following comparisons:

Sara Gabrielson Goes To Paradise by Henry Andrew Ackermann, published in Polaris, Vol. 2--No. 2, June 1941, is actually: Kari Aasen In Heaven by Johan Bojer, published in The World's One Hundred Best Short Stories, Vol. 9--Ghosts, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1927.

Keeper of the Gate by Henry Andrew Ackermann, published in The Acolyte, Vol. I--No. 3, Spring 1943, is actually: The Time Watcher by Oliver LaFarge, published in Coronet, August 1938.

In both of these cases, we find a word-for-word copying, except for changes in proper names and titles. The disgust of The Acolyte's editors is too profound to be capable of expression in decent language. This magazine is published solely as a hobby, and we consider its highest purpose the publication of worthwhile amateur writing. When such a skunk as Mr. Ackermann comes along, he not only puts us in a most embarrassing situation, but actually robs some sincere, beginning writer of the pages upon which he might have achieved publication. We suggest that all fans boycott Ackermann completely--and, in addition, if any of you should be sharp enough to find a definite plagiarism in one of his professionally published stories, we should be most grateful to you for detailed information of a type capable of standing up in court. Personally, we should be very happy to help this chap get what he so richly deserves.

-----ooOoo-----

**IN COMING ISSUES:** The Acolyte is very badly in need of serious, erudite articles and essays on various phases of weird and fantastic fiction. These items may be either bibliographical

(continued on p. 24)

# MORTE JAMBE

T. BRUCE YERKE

Monsieur Foucheraux was exceedingly careless one afternoon. The Rue de Marcassant is known as a most unpleasant crossing at the very least; leading in from the river, it opens into the Place de la Cresus, a narrow square, a blind box of rambling, eroded flats.

The Place de la Cresus lies at the top of a narrow, inclined curve, the continuation of a bridge crossing the river from the modern city. The bridge is old and lime-encrusted; the road, a cobblestoned atrocity.

M. Foucheraux paused in front of the apothecarie and exchanged a word or two with the loiterers outside. Then the pinched old bachelor cast a careless glance across the square, pulled nervously at the lapel of his black frock-coat, and, grasping his walking stick in hand, forged out across the cobblestones.

He seemed quite oblivious to the roar of the omnibus which was at that moment clattering up the road from the bridge. The coachman was undoubtedly a reckless fellow, or one unfamiliar with the route, for he burst into the Place de la Cresus with four horses blowing froth and whip flaying furiously.

Too late he saw the blind crossing. He shrieked an unintelligible oath and threw the brake, drawing rein desperately. The omnibus lurched and oscillated on its skidding, heavy wheels. Trunks and boxes on the roof teetered and bounded off, scattering intimate contents.

M. Foucheraux seemed only gradually to become aware of this catastrophe bearing down upon him. The four horses bucked and were thrown in their whipple-trees. The coachman stood on his stepboard and threw his weight on the brake.

The shrieking, rumbling cauldron of confusion staggered onto M. Foucheraux. The black figure was lost in the swirling dust and flying hoofs. The left front wheel passed over his thigh. Then the omnibus tottered in a cloud of dust and crashed to its side. The horses came down en masse and the coachman arched through the air and landed, most fortunately, in a bale of cotton goods by Madam Moullin-court's factory.

"What a mess! What a mess!" mumbled and exclaimed the crowd that poured out of the formerly blank white-washed buildings.

"Did you see that fool coachman?" the apothecarie attendant demanded as he stood on his counter to see over the milling throng outside. "He charged through the court like a corps of cassions running the Marne."

In the midst of this confusion, M. Foucheraux lay prostrate, writhing in agony with his right leg turned almost upon itself. He shook his walking stick in the air and his sharply pointed face was contorted in anger and shock.

"Pig! Pig! Pig!" he kept shrieking. "Ignorant pig! Dunder-headed pig! Bloated, drunken lout of a pig! Because of the stupid pig I shall probably lose my leg!"

"Damme! Sacre Dieu! Where is a doctor? Am I to bleed in the streets like an ignominious slut?" He coughed and lapsed into a delirium, muttering "Pig! Pig! Pig!"

The doctor fought his way to the felled figure in its pool of blood and commenced to attend to him. M. Foucheraux was removed to his apartment as soon as the doctor had tied the major arteries. An amputation was performed. The severed member was sent to the crematorie.



The good inhabitants were ready in assisting to extract the tangled passengers from the interior of the coach and to soothe the badly scared driver, who was, of course, summarily discharged. Two of the horses had been shot, as their legs were broken. The trundling omnibus needed a new side.

Such a major spectacle in a dreary part of town like the Place de la Cr sus is in itself enough to keep tongues wagging for some time. But then Marie, a nurse delegated to attend the recuperation of M. Foucheraux, of whom nobody cared much if he recovered or not, burst forth with the wildest story.

"Do you know what the crazy old man demanded?" she told the girls who worked for Madame Moullincourt. "That old man demanded that Doctor Fortinescu bring back his leg!"

"That is my leg!" he raved. "Insufferable stupidity of it all! People aren't going to take away my leg because of that ignorant pig! Now listen, Doctor, you simply must let me have my leg, whether or not it is attached to my stump. Do you understand, you drooling guillotine? I must have my leg!"

The story spread about. Marie told with horror how Dr. Fortinescu drove down to the crematorie and rescued the severed limb. The attendant at the apothecarie verified the woman's tale.

"Mon Dieu!" he breathed to a crowd of rapt listeners who hung over the chemically stained and eaten counter board. "In comes Dr. Fortinescu with this gruesome package.

"Say there, Robin," he bellows at me, all red and furious to himself, 'I want about five gallons of alcohol and the biggest bell-tube in the shop!'

"So I say to him: 'And what can you want with that, Doctor? An orgy maybe?' You know how Fortinescu drinks.

"Bah!" he says, 'mind your wit. Just come in back with me and I'll teach you more about your business in five minutes than you learn in five years talking to those oafs at the counter.'

"So we go to the back room, and I find a three-foot bell-tube which he makes me clean out. And then, nom de J sus... he unwraps that bloody package! Oh! The stink... and there is that filthy leg!"

"I don't eat for two days. He sews up the top and puts it in the jar, all the time swearing to himself. He even takes a drink then.

"So we tap a barrel of alcohol and even empty six or seven bottles to fill up that unholy tube. Then he puts on a cap and seals it with paraffine.

"Alors!" he says to me, wiping his forehead and looking sick and disgusted, 'Not a word of this stupidity, Robin, and here is a sovereign to seal your mouth.'

"He looks at the leg and swears some more. 'Now, you obscene old man,' he says to himself, 'you can have your leg all the time. Hah! Take a bath in it.....'"

## II.

When M. Foucheraux recuperated sufficiently to make use of a crutch, he testily dismissed the nurse Marie, who was quite glad to be relieved of her post. Dr. Fortinescu called and presented a bill. Foucheraux, who lived his solitary life on funds coming from several minor properties in Alsace, went to his desk, a hideous survival of the "period of bad taste", and withdrew a worn money bag.

"I must thank you again and again, monsieur le docteur," he said, counting out the gold coins, "for what you have done to my leg. A thousand-----"

"Oh God! I don't want to hear any more about it," Fortinescu exploded. "Here is your bill and you are paying me, which is more than lots of my clients do and I'm glad of it.....Hector, you will make an obsession out of that filthy thing."

M. Foucheraux bowed politely and nodded his head, grinning broadly. "My leg," he muttered. And louder: "You may call it my, er, companion," he smiled, his narrow brown eyes looking intently at the doctor. A little wildly, the other thought.

The doctor took his coins and hurried out of the dark apartment and down the narrow, flimsy stairs. He barged across to the apothecary. "Robin," he bellowed, pushing his way through the counter leaners. "I will have some alcohol...but not for our client."

M. Foucheraux's apartment consisted of one room, and a sort of alcove where he would eat his solitary meal. The two windows on the west wall were cloudy with dust and the cheap curtains entirely neglected. Most often the shutters were drawn. Aside from a couch along the north wall by the door, and sundry dry-looking bookshelves, pictures, and common furnishings; the primary piece of furniture was an Alsatian taberette placed beside the hearth--an heirloom, incongruously out of place in the shabby surroundings.

Standing upon this piece was the bell-tube, and in it, suspended in all its stark grotesqueness, was M. Foucheraux's leg. It was in almost a standing position, though occasionally it would rotate slowly--say once a week--owing to reasons unknown and uncared about.

It wasn't much of a leg, but it belonged to M. Foucheraux. The toes were cramped, and had not been cleaned before the sad parting. The calf was hard and white, the muscles taut as they had been when the last message from the brain had reached them. The thigh was rather lean and the flesh slightly flabby. M. Foucheraux noted with disappointment that the short black hairs had ceased to grow, contrary to the popular belief.

Ah, Monsieur Foucheraux! The hours he sits and contemplates that crude anatomical exhibition! At night he draws the shutters, and after he finishes his few dishes he pulls up his chair and lights the fireplace.

And then what does he do? A rational person would light his pipe and read, follow La Petite Journal, or catch up on that lovably overdone old cynic La Rouchefoucauld, or scan a novel. But he? Ne jamais! Like a hypnotic he sits and contemplates his leg. That ugly old unwholesome limb that probably stank with sweat and dirt before the omnibus did its work.

But the world centers about it, for it is his limb! That sets it apart from all the other limbs in the world.

M. Foucheraux thought precisely that. As time went on, it did become the center of his world. Religiously every night he sat down with his pipe, and contemplated his leg in the bell-tube.

His leg! That inanimate mass of protein and calcium and protoplasm--he used to walk on it. It used to fit right there on the end of his stump.

His sharp, pointed face grew sharper and furrowed. His narrow eyes would focus on the leg as he probed the depths of his memory. Once, when he had been very young, he had been in a fight, and kicked a bully with that very same thing.

And he used to throw it over the branch of the cherry tree on that estate in Alsace and hoist himself up with it.

And now here he could sit, quite removed from it, and look at it abstractedly over his pipe, and realise that it was his leg there. His leg, the leg that used to fit right on his stump and that was concealed there by his trousers. And now the stupid thing was up there in a jar like a rare Mediterranean fish or fossil.

The horribleness of the conception grew upon M. Foucheraux one night as he sat contemplating his leg over a cup of coffee. He had an



irresistable urge to flex the now missing tendons. He looked at the space on the stool where the limb should be resting. Once, for about three feet beyond his stump there had been attached that leg, and the blood that now coursed through his vessels pumped through there, and there were numerous muscles which he could control at the slightest whim.

And now they were gone.

His nerves ended in a vast, aching void.

Frustration!

He sent a now-forgotten impulse down to his stump. Once it would have made that leg in the jar stir slightly, or flex, or---

M. Foucheraux suddenly grew rigid. His brown eyes were dangerously wide and intent. Sucking in his breath carefully, he sent that impulse again.

Sacré diable! He would swear that the large toe on the sealed limb had quivered and twitched slightly.

Clutching the arms of the chair tightly, he leaned forward, and strained all his will and nerves in a mighty command.

The limb in the bell-tube--an eerie thing half-lighted from the flickering fireplace--slowly, slowly began to flex.

M. Foucheraux's mouth dropped open. His eyes stared at the fearsome sight. Blood rushing to his temples, he continued to will himself, half hypnotised, half frozen with fear.

What outre manifestation was this? What loathsome, incredible thing was he doing?

"My leg, my leg," he panted. His mouth slowly curled into a contorted smile. "It's still mine! It lives!"

He stood up, his heart beating wildly. The leg in the bell-tube was flexing itself, and the toes were twitching, just as Foucheraux was willing them to do.

He forgot he had but one leg. His balance tottered. Then, with an agony of cramp in his stump, his feverish blood, driven by an overtaxed heart, ruptured the stitchings.

The helpless figure fell onto the alcohol-filled bell-tube, the livid blood spurting out in great throbs from the open artery.. The glass cylinder, reflecting starkly the red lights from the hearth, tottered under the impact and crashed to the floor.

The torrent of alcohol within burst out across the writhing figure. The cadaverous leg, now suddenly bloated from its contact with air, caught the paralysed man in the neck.

"Marie! Fortinescu!" he screamed. "God of heaven...someone save me!"

The blood and the alcohol flowed together and into the fireplace. With a burst of flame, the fiery tongues blossomed out and caught first on the curtains.

"Marie! Fortinescu!" Foucheraux screamed and sobbed.

He turned and twisted, his throbbing, pumping stump vomiting a spurting wash of blood into the holocaust. A moment, and the entire room was an inferno. Foucheraux buried his face in the crook of his leg. He was shrieking, but he had ceased to shriek words.

The Place de la Cresus was full of fire-fighting apparatus, and it was broad noon before the final sparks of the devastated flat had been quenched. People crowded the square and chattered endlessly to each other.

"Poor M. Foucheraux! Caught helpless in that horrible trap, and with only one leg!"

Dr. Fortinescu leaned across the counter-board in the apothecary, and stared into the blackened remains. "You know, Robin,"

# THE LITTLE ONES

Beyond the hill in twilight groves they dwell;  
The Little Ones who flit on bush and tree,  
Whirling in the night like eerie fireflies,  
Still searching for a pathway none can see.

I cannot tell their shape or purpose here:  
It is a secret older than the years.  
Sometimes at dusk when winds are whispering,  
Their pulsing music falls upon my ears.

It is a haunted vale the Indians shunned,  
And white men smiled when natives cursed the place.  
But now and then some youth who ventures there  
Returns with fear and horror on his face.

Some say that when the moon is full and bright  
The Little Ones creep upward in the sky,  
As if to seek those distant shadow realms  
From whence they came, and where they want to die.

One night I slipped away into the hills  
And watched the Little Ones who flit about.  
Now people say that I have changed, but God!  
I cannot let their dreadful secret out.

---Duane W. Rimel

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## MORTE JAMBE. (Concluded)

he said to the attendant, "I believe that I am an arsonist."

"Fah!" Robin grunted. "La crematorie doesn't like to get cheated from her due. Have some alcohol?"

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## A CHECK-LIST OF MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS, (1775-1818)

(Lewis' first and most famous novel, The Monk, is referred to by H.P.Lovecraft as "a masterpiece of active nightmare whose general Gothic cast is spiced with added stores of ghouliness". Many of the other items here listed may be classed as weird-Gothic. FTL-SDR.)

AMBROSIO, or THE MONK. 1796.

THE CASTLE SPECTRE. (Play) 1798.

TALES OF TERROR. 1799.

THE EAST INDIAN. (Play) 1799.

TALES OF WONDER. (Collab. with Sir Walter Scott) 1801.

ADELMORN, or THE OUTLAW. (Play) 1801.

ALFONSO, KING OF CASTILE. (Play) 1802.

THE BRAVO OF VENICE. (Novel) 1804.

RUGANTINO. (Play) 1805.

ADELGITHA. (Play) 1807.

FEUDAL TYRANTS. (Trans. from the German) 1806.

VENONI. (Play) 1808.

BLANCHE AND OSBRIGHT. 1808

ROMANTIC TALES. 1808.

TIMOUR THE TARTER. (Play) 1811.

RICH AND POOR. (Opera) 1813.

KOENIGSMARK, or TERROR OF BOHEMIA. 1818.

JOURNAL OF A WEST INDIAN PROPRIETOR. 1834.

LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE. Colburn, 1839.

--W. Paul Cook and R. H. Barlow.



# SUMMER'S CLOUD ANTHONY BOUCHER

Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder?

Walter Hancock was not superstitious. He said so to his wife when they walked on either side of a post on their way from the little Italian pension to the railway station. And he said so to his table companion at dinner that evening, when he had drunk a glass more than usual to prove that he was a bachelor for the night. This of course was why he had spilled the salt, or perhaps it was because his table companion spoke with a strange accent and wore a low-necked gown. He could not decide which intrigued him the more, and took another glass of wine to find out. He decided upon the gown, or at least... Well, yes - the gown.

Giuseppe, proprietor of the pension, looked surprised and not altogether pleased when Mr. Hancock danced with his table companion after dinner. He was talking excitedly with his wife Maria when the two came off the balcony out of the Italian moonlight. Maria passed near to them and looked at Mr. Hancock very closely. Especially at his throat.

Giuseppe was still displeased when Mr. Hancock ordered brandy. But Mr. Hancock was very well pleased indeed when the brandy came. The growth of his familiarity with his companion's accent kept even pace with the alcoholic dulling of his perceptions, so that her speech still remained vague but fascinating. The movements of the dance had made her other fascination much more clear to him.

It was in the dark hall that she told him she would leave her door open. He was not quite sure of what she said, but the welcome which his lips and hands received reassured him. Nor was his assurance shaken when he met Maria at the head of the stairs. But he was puzzled. Even his slight knowledge of Italian sufficed to make clear that she was delivering a physical warning, not a moral reprimand. The morals of her lodgers were none of her affair, she kept saying; or were the repetitions within his brain? That was nonsense, but it was what she said. At least he thought so; la morta was Death, wasn't it? He was still puzzled when she went away, and looked curiously at the little gold cross which she had pressed into his hand with such urgent instructions.

Giuseppe and Maria were not puzzled when Mr. Hancock's companion was not in her room the next morning. She was, in fact, nowhere in the pension; and Giuseppe advanced the theory, with which Maria agreed, that she was nowhere in Italy. They were only slightly puzzled when they found Mr. Hancock's body on her bed. There were no clothes outside his flesh, and no blood inside. Nor was there a trace of blood anywhere in the room.

Although they jointly resolved that even her liberal payments could not induce them to accept Mr. Hancock's companion as a guest again, Maria's conscience felt clear when she found the small gold cross in the hall where Mr. Hancock had obviously tossed it in scorn.

You see, he was not superstitious.

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IF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION HAS EXPIRED, YOU WILL NOTICE A CRYPTICALLY CABALISTIC RUBBER STAMP TO THE RIGHT OF THIS SENTENCE.

# THE FAMILY TREE OF THE GODS

- CLARK ASHTON SMITH

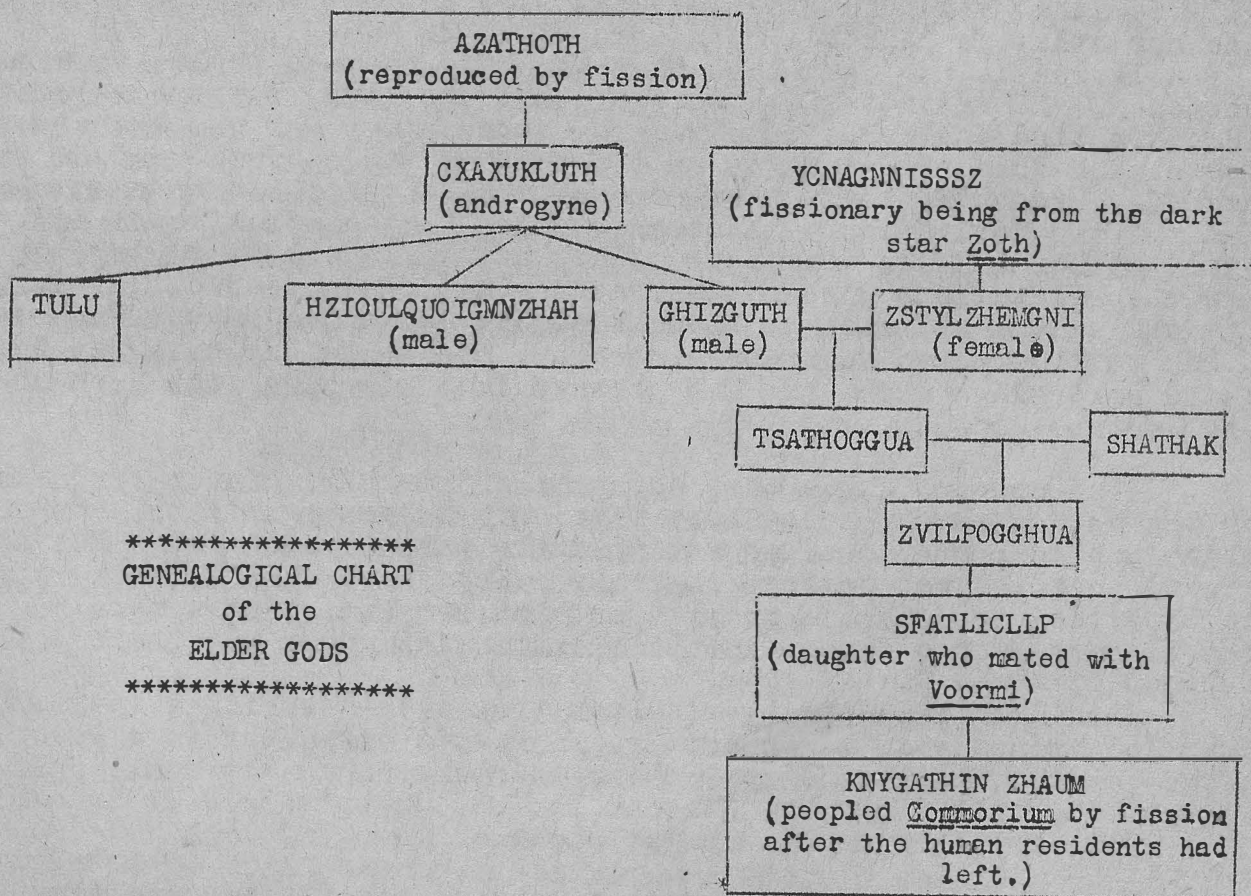
(The genealogical information and chart of descendents contained in this sketch are taken from a letter written some years ago to R. H. Barlow by Klarkash Ton, and are published here by permission. FTL-SDR)

-oOo-

...I have filled out the "style-sheet" with such annotations and details concerning Tsathoggua as I am at present able to furnish. Some of these have required considerable delving into the Parchments of Pnom (who was the chief Hyperborean genealogist as well as a noted prophet) and I am well aware that certain of my phonetic renderings from the Elder Script are debatable. You raise some interesting points with your questions. Azathoth, the primal nuclear chaos, reproduced of course only by fission; but its progeny, entering various outer planets, often took on attributes of androgynism or bisexuality. The androgynes, curiously, required no coadjutancy in the production of offspring; but their children were commonly unisexual, male or female. Hzioulquiag-mnzah, uncle of Tsathoggua, and Ghizghuth, Tsathoggua's father, were the male progeny of Cxaxukluth, the androgynous spawn of Azathoth. Thus you will note a trend toward biological complexity. It is worthy of record, however, that Knygathin Zhaum, the half-breed Voormi, reverted to the most primitive Azathothian characteristics following the stress of his numerous decapitations. I have yet to translate the terrible and abominable legend telling how a certain doughty citizen of

(see page 10)

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\*\*\*\*\*  
 GENEALOGICAL CHART  
 of the  
 ELDER GODS  
 \*\*\*\*\*



Commorion (not Athamma) returned to the city after its public evacuation, and found that it was peopled most execrably and numerously by the fissional spawn of Knygathin Zhaum, which possessed no vestige of anything human or even earthly.

Ech-Pi-El, I am sure, can furnish much fuller data concerning the genesis of Tulu (Cthulhu) than I am able to offer. It would seem, from the rather oblique references of Phom, that Tulu was a cousin of Hzioulquoigmznzhah, but was somewhat closer to the Azathothian archetype than Hzioulquoigmznzhah. The latter god, I learn, together with Ghisghuth, was born of Cxa kluth in a far system. Cxaxukluth came en famille (family already included Ghisguth's wife, Zstylzhemgni, and the infant Tsathoggua) to Yuggoth (where, I may add, Cxaxukluth has most mercifully continued to sojourn throughout the aeons. Hzioulquoigmznzhah, who found his parent slightly uncongenial owing to its cannibalistic habits, emigrated to Yaksh (Neptune) at an early age; but, wearying of the peculiar religious devotions of the Yakshians, went on to Cykranosh, in which he preceded by several aeons his nephew Tsathoggua. (Tsathoggua, with his parents, lingered a long while in Yuggoth, having penetrated certain central caverns beyond the depredations of Cxaxukluth.) Hzioulquoigmznzhah, a rather reflective and philosophic deity, was long worshipped by the quaint peoples of Cykranosh but grew tired of them even as of the Yakshians; and he had permanently retired from active life at the time of his encounter with Eibon as related in The Door to Saturn. No doubt he still resides in the columned cavern, and still quenches his thirst at the lake of liquid metal--a confirmed bachelor, and sans offspring.

My account of Tsathoggua's terrene advent can readily be reconciled with the references in The Mound. Tsathoggua, travelling through another dimension than the familiar three, first entered the Earth by means of the lightless inner gulf of N'Kai; and he lingered there for cycles, during which his ultraterrestrial origin was not suspected. Later, he established himself in caverns nearer to the surface, and his cult thrived; but after the coming of the ice he returned to N'Kai. Thereafter, much of his legend was forgotten or misunderstood by the dwellers in the red-litten caverns of Yoth and the blue-litten caverns of K'n-Yan. Through such mythopoetic variations, Gll'-Hathaa-Ynn came to tell the Spaniard Zamarcona that only the images of Tsathoggua, and not Tsathoggua himself, had emerged from the inner world....

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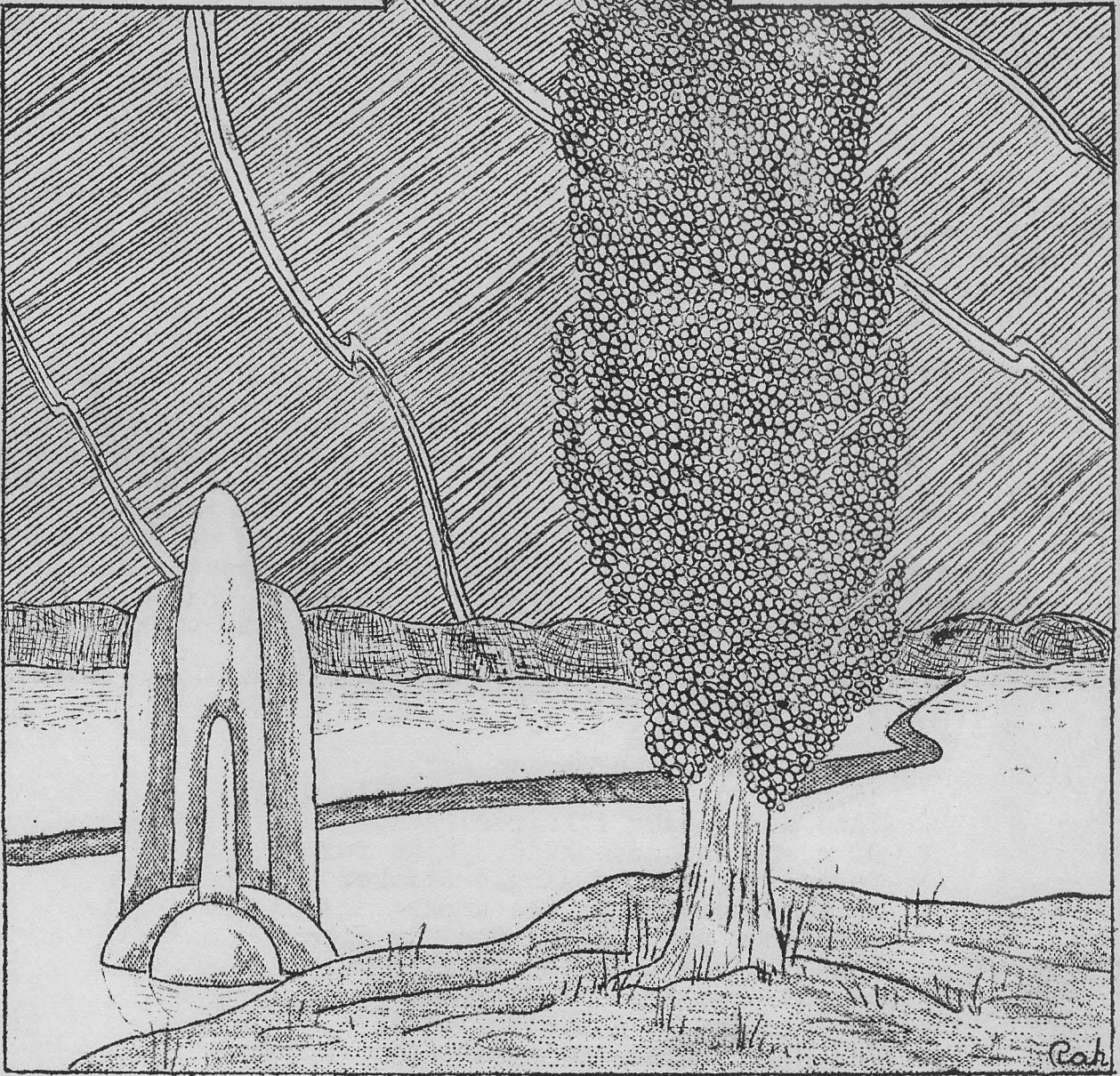
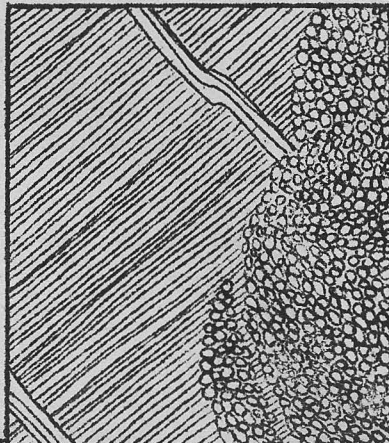
## LIGHT FANTASTIC

I step along the garden path  
(Repatterned by the night wind's wrath)  
Into a frenzied filigree  
Of mists and moonshine. Spun for me  
To scatter with a single stroke.  
As effervescent as the smoke  
Of seared and burning phoenix flesh  
That fades within the tangled mesh  
Of mad creation. Then I heard  
The singing of a phantom bird.  
And woke and walked again--and found  
A second phantom on the ground.

Then smiled, as one who sips an acrid wine.  
Those flaccid lips, those sightless eyes--were mine!

---Arthur Kennedy





THE GODS OF BAL-ARKOTH



# THE HARPER \* ALLAN R ROBERTS

Slowly and with painful steps the long chain of bound captives filed along the rough stones, and ever and again the whips of the victorious soldiers flickered out to hasten their gait. And ever and again the King shifted in his palanquin of samite and gold, and turned to urge on his bearers, so that the prisoners stumbled and fell as the pace increased; and the people howled their delight, for by strength and blood had the King won his throne, and by strength and blood would he keep it.

At dusk, when the last shuddering gasp from tongues without lips, and the last horrible gurgle from lips without tongues, had faded away down the narrow staircase leading to that dark, cold room under the palace--at dusk, then, the King summoned his courtiers and proclaimed a royal feast. Then did those skilled in such matters repair to the palace hall, and soon the air was redolent of bergamot and vervain, and the sweetly cloying essence of the suna bush; and from the glittering walls and the crystal chandeliers shone studded sapphires, and the pale green peridot, and the tiny cymophane that seems to burst with light, and the strange tyano whose colour no man is able to name; and the dancers donned their draperies of brocade and exquisitely fine gold plate, and their tiny slippers of doeskin set with beryls, and their fans of peacock's down; and the floor was cunningly prepared for the corantos and sarabands they would dance that night. Thus in celebration would men honour the conqueror.

So at the appointed time that night the lamps were lit and the alcove braziers fired, and the multicoloured light flickered and danced over the precious stones; and first of all the company the King entered the great hall and mounted his throne of ebony and scarlet. With haughty pride he gazed out over his glory, and his hand was raised to summon the first entertainers, when suddenly the silken hangings in the outer doorway parted, and a figure bore its way through the crowd of sycophants to the very base of the throne, carrying a silver harp. And before the King could call servants to remove this impudent fellow in shabby velvet, the man plucked at his harp, and the King was still.

As the pliant fingers caressed sweet music from the silver strings, the King's thoughts turned to other days; for the chords sang of lost joys and sweet longings, and of the fresh fragrance of a green field in spring and the lone cry of a linnet at dawning. And the King remembered days when he had not known the wine of grandeur, days ere the savagery of battle had become part of him; and he forgot his dreams of conquest and power, and remembered only the dreams of long ago, dreams so little and yet so infinitely dear. Thus the King mused, and his memories were sweet and strangely sad.

The harper paused, and while the soft echoes of the last mellow note crept slowly away, and for long moments after, the King moved not and his features were as one who dreams; and as one who awakens from a dream the King suddenly shook himself and gazed up. Then with a firm hand he pointed to the harper and said:

"Seize him and bind him with strong cords. By strength and blood I gained my throne, and by strength and blood shall I keep it. Yea, bind him, and that all may see that the strength of the King has not failed, bring him with me where such things may best be proven."

But the harper spoke not a word, neither did he speak nor groan during the long hours in that dank, dark room beneath the palace,

despite that the King and his helpers were well versed in modes of stimulating loquacity, and it was generally agreed that the King had proved what he set out to prove. So the man died, and the King reflected that never again could the harpist's skill serve to unman him; never again could his own youthful innocence return from the graveyard of the years to undermine his resolution. And at the thought the King's satisfaction was tempered by strange regret, and by that he knew that he had not killed the music's echoes lingering in his heart.

Furiously and with something of panic the King sought forgetfulness, and by their very nature his attempts but intensified his pain. His stallion's hooves dripped scarlet as he rode over dead and dying alike on field after field, but the sadistic joy such actions formerly evoked was gone, and he could only remember a sweeter dew he had seen on primrose and poppy long ago. In war after war, conquest after conquest, the King drove his fame abroad and bitter regret deep into his soul. Through far fields of savagery the King rode madly, filling his nostrils with the sickening scent of the ghastly asphodels that bloomed there; but ever there would come drifting over the bloody ground a note of music, a sweet, trembling note from a silver harp; and the King would pause in his mad gallop and remember the years that were dead and the flowers that had faded, and ever those subtle notes served to dethrone the mighty King and to place in his stead a youth with untidy hair, who had thought with eagerness and dreamed a little.

Until finally there came the day when those vagrant chords conquered, and he could no longer contravene his thoughts by his actions. So he rested, and his armies came home from their glory, and his sword hung useless in its sheath, and in the little room beneath the palace the brazen door was shut and sealed.

And his rule became easier and more tolerant, and slow deaths gradually decreased in number...and vaguely men whispered, and the whispers passed with ever-growing volume and slowly swelled and crystallized into actions, as weeds grow unchecked. And one morning the King awoke to find a sharp blade at his throat and a cord awaiting his hands, and he realized that he was King no longer. For by strength and blood had he gained his throne, and by strength and blood must he keep it.

But the New King was merciful in his greatness and graciously consented to spare his life--though first the brazen door had to be opened, for the New King had lost several relatives in that dark, cold room. So, when he had been fully satisfied, and after allowing the Old King appropriate time to recover, the New King chained the dumb, handless piece of burnt and flayed flesh that now was the Old King, and stationed him to serve in the stables, that his guests might glance over the balcony and be amused by the shuffling monstrosity that once had been a tyrant and a king.

But at noon did the Old King know the limits of degradation and realize that his former torments were as nothing. For at noon every day the Court Musician came out onto the balcony to play, and the Old King saw with unbelieving horror that his instrument was a monstrously familiar silver harp, and remembered too late that though that disturbing harpist of old had indeed died, his harp had been thrown negligently into a bone-filled pit in the dark, cold room and forgotten. But now when the fiery golden chords leaped out in another tune, the air resounded with glory and the clash of arms and the steady tread of men



marching abreast mingled with the intoxicant shrilling of the trumpets of victory; and the Old King's scarred shoulders stiffened, and in his eyes gleamed the sparks of the years that were; once more in his ears rang the frenzied shouts of his people as he rode in state down that jewel-paved road; once more, once more, three times ten thousand men knelt in homage at his feet, and thrice ten thousand sword-blades flashed at his word of command; once more he was a conqueror, once more he was a King!...till the music stopped...and he slowly looked down at the rags on his body and the chains on his feet, and tried to close a fist that he did not have, and to speak without a tongue; and as he sobbed in unthinkable shame and sank to his knees in the muck and slime of the stables, amid mocking tinkles from the balcony the King knew, fully and completely, the vengeance of the harp.

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## LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASISTES

BY HAROLD WAKEFIELD

5. A. M. BURRAGE

-oOo-

A. M. Burrage began to write stories while still at school, and became a professional author at 17. Serving as a private in the Artists' Rifles during the last war, he was invalided home in 1918, and has been contributing stories and articles to most of the better known English magazines since that time. Under the pen-name of "Ex-Private X", he has published two books, War Is War and Someone in the Room, and then later under his own name another collection of creepy tales entitled Some Ghost Stories.

Though obviously a disciple of M. R. James, he will never achieve the stature of his master, but on occasion he conveys a potent thrill to his readers.

In one of the best of Burrage's stories, Snee, a game of hide-and-seek is played by a group of twelve grownups at a christmas party. Into this game a thirteenth player intrudes, and it is not until one of the players seeking refuge in an already occupied alcove actually talks to and touches his companion that the true nature of the grisly occupant is revealed. The reader will readily discern the influence here of M. R. James.

Another powerful piece of writing is One Who Saw. It tells of a mysterious woman who sits at night in a garden with her face always averted, death or madness awaiting any man with the hardihood to gaze on her features.

In Nobody's House, a fine example of mounting suspense, a man reconstructs a murder of twenty years ago, an experiment which ends in death for himself.

The Waxwork is a psychological horror story in which the victim is killed by his own imagination. Laid in the chamber of horrors at a waxworks museum, this story builds up a powerful atmosphere.

The very trite theme of the ghost of an unjustly executed man returning to prove his innocence is saved by fine handling in Browdean Farm. Though very similar in theme, I consider this story to be far superior in treatment to E. F. Benson's The Hanging of Alfred Wadham.

An unusual and pathetic story is The Oak Saplings, in which the spirits of two murdered young lovers haunt a pair of saplings. The

(concluded on page 15)

# REGNAR LODBRUG'S EPICEDIUM

(An 8th Century Funeral Song...  
Translated from Olaus Wormius)

by H. P. Lovecraft.

(Editors' note: This interesting item presents to Acolyte readers what was to us, at least, an entirely new facet of HPL's writings. Written about 1930, The Epicedium is probably one of the very earliest attempts by Lovecraft to "translate" a mythical manuscript, and is also notable for the first reference to the redoubtable Olaus Wormius, who later became renowned as a translator and publisher of the diabolic writings of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred. The various gaps in the poem are, we assume, deliberate; and probably are meant to convey the idea that only portions of so ancient and battered a vellum could be deciphered. So far as we know, Regnar Lodbrug's Epicedium is new to print. It appears here through the courtesy of R. H. Barlow and August Derleth. FTL-SDR.)

With our swords have we contended!  
Come but new to Gothland's shore  
For the killing of the serpent  
We have gain'd from Thor ( )  
( )  
From this deed they call me man  
Because I have transfix'd the adder:  
Shaggy Breeches from that slaughter.  
( )  
I have thrust a spear into the serpent  
With metal brighter ( )

With our swords have we contended!  
But a youth was I when eastward  
In the channel of Oreon  
With our foeman's gore in torrents  
We the ( ) and wolves delighted;  
And the yellow-footed buzzard.  
There the harden'd steel resounded  
On the high-wrought hostile helmets.  
One vast wound was all the ocean  
And the hungry raven waded  
Searching for its carrion food  
Deep in dead men's thick'ning blood.

With our swords have we contended!  
Ere two score of years we counted  
High we bore our glist'ning lances  
Wide we heard our fame and praises.  
In the east before the harbour  
(Barons eight we overcame;)  
We the rav'ning eagle glutted;  
Dripping wounds fill'd up the ocean.  
Weary of the hopeless fray,  
All the host dissolved away



With our swords have we contended!  
 When the Vistula we enter'd  
 With our ships in battle order  
 We unto the hall of Woden  
 Sent the bold Helsingian foemen.  
 Then the sword-points bit in fury;  
 All the billows turn'd to life-blood  
 Earth with streaming gore was crimson'd;  
 Reeking sword with ringing note  
 Shields divided; armour smote.

(With our swords have we contended!)  
 (None had fallen on that day  
 (Till on his ship Heraucius fell:  
 (Than him before no braver baron  
 Cleft the sea with ships of battle;  
 Never after him was chieftan  
 Lighter hearted in the fighting.

With our swords have we contended!  
 Now the host flung down their buckles;  
 Flying spears tore hero's bosoms  
 Swords on Scarfian rocks were striking.  
 Gory was his shield in slaughter  
 Till the royal Rofus perish'd.  
 Sweat from weary hands and pale  
 Trickled down the suits of mail.

With our swords have we contended!  
 Copious booty had the ravens  
 Round about the Indirian islands,  
 In that single day of action  
 (One in many deaths was little. )  
 (The rising sun grew bright on spears)  
 In the forms of prostrate warrior-men.  
 Arrows from their bows ejected;  
 (Weapons roared on Lano's plain.  
 (Long the virgin mourned that slaughter.)

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#### LITTLE-KNOWN FANTASISTES. (concluded from page 13)

-oOo-

trees sometimes appear to the chance passer-by as a pair of lovers murmuring endearments to each other while clasped in one another's arms. No reader will feel sympathy for the girl's murderous old father when the trees finally exact vengeance.

All the stories mentioned above deserve reading, though they perhaps reveal more the able craftsman than the master. In this connection, it is interesting to note that M. R. James thought highly of Burrage's work, saying: "Of living writers I have some hesitation in speaking, but on any list that I was forced to compile, the names of E. F. Benson, Algernon Blackwood, Walter de la Mare, H. R. Wakefield, and A. M. Burrage would find a place."

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HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT, 1890-1937: A TENTATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY. 12 pages of otherwise unavailable information, compiled by the Acolyte staff and published by Evans and Laney. 10¢ each.  
 Francis T. Laney, 1104 South Georgia St., Los Angeles 15, California.

# SHOP TALK: A LETTER TO THE ACOLYTE

by E. Hoffman Price

-ooo-

Without intending any disrespect to H. P. Lovecraft or to the tastes of his many admirers, I must say that I can go for "unnameable" stuff just so long. That I can read it at all is a supreme tribute to HPL as a craftsman. And on top of it all, he did create remarkably faithful and sound mundane backgrounds and personalities. I prefer the weird yarn which is keyed to earth's problems. That is, I am almost totally lacking in that sense of cosmic terror which is required either to write or to enjoy the type of yarn in which he specialized. I do not for a moment condemn or look down on those who do have a taste for cosmic horror--no more than does my color-blind buddy ridicule my taste for Persian carpets, of which I have a modest, yet diverse, collection.

HPL once asked me, "But don't you shudder and ask, can these things really be?" We'd been discussing Arthur Machen, cosmic horror, etc., in Providence, on July 5, 1933. I said: "Frankly, no. I read Machen with interest, yes; I read your works with the keenest interest--because of the style, the settings, the personalities, the flavor, the workmanship--but I simply do not get anything resembling any sense of horror. I sincerely and deeply admire 'Pickman's Model', I have re-read it many a time--but without a hint of a shiver. I've re-read 'Cthulhu', enjoyed it each time, but no horror."

He gave up. I wasn't disparaging him or his ideal of fiction, and he never disparaged my aims. Neither of us could have been quite so silly and childish. He did disparage--in an impersonal and amiable way--portions of one of my yarns, because the yarn was not a good example of its type; just as I shook my head sadly at one of his, and on the same grounds. Not because it was a story of mood instead of a story of action, but because it was not well done as a yarn of mood--just as mine had been poorly done as a yarn of action. Neither disparaged the other's aim. Whatever infrequent and mild criticism--of the most impersonal sort--HPL and I exchanged, was leveled at that story in which the author had not achieved his aim. To belittle the author's aim is something else. The criterion we had was, is this good for its kind? Not, is this a good kind? Did the author achieve his purpose? Not, was his purpose right or wrong?

As a broad generality, I say that fans tend to bigotry, to self-centeredness, to setting up a one-man criterion of excellence, and then feeling that all other readers should accept the same criterion. Why that pontifical attitude which Fort terms "exclusionism"?

The Christian faith has many splendid aspects--but its damning all other faiths and arrogantly presuming to "convert" the "heathen" is what makes it, to me, offensive. I greatly admire the Moslem faith, and find but one fault: the same one I charge to the Christian. If not converting infidels, then the sharp line of demarcation, the feeling of superiority to the infidel. Judaism--more of the same: the elect, and then the gentiles. All of a piece with Hitler and his herrenvolk!

The Chinaman is the only civilized person extant. He doesn't believe that anything as personal as belief is worth arguing about! The Chinese are the only major group who have abstained from persecutions of a religious nature. Hinduism is as pernicious (far more so, in fact!) as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in its exclusionistic arrogance. The Buddhists come closest to being free of that arrogance.

We need more Buddhistic influence among our fans.



And these ratings which fan mags have published--what rot! A fair, impersonal display of discrimination, a detached attitude in making comparisons--that's splendid! But the belittling and disparaging, that's something else.

I read a lot of stuff I consider sheer drivel. OK. But other readers think it's enchanting. The editor would be a goddamn fool if he ignored those readers and bore down on just what I like. Who am I to want a mag made up 100% to my taste? Am I buying up the entire edition? If so, then I'd be entitled to demand 100% my pet yarn-styles.

Why don't fans strive to become connoisseurs and quit being enthusiasts? I use enthusiast in its original sense: a person who is dizzy, hopped up, obsessed with some notion--and with the implication that he's reached the point of incoherence and irrationality. He feels exalted and prophetic, usually with little justification.

I don't blame fans for being enthusiasts, understand. Any person of intense personality is bound to be an enthusiast, for a while. Finally he sobers up enough to become a connoisseur.

After all, it is twenty years this coming week since I wrote my first weird yarn. Naturally enough, I am no longer the enthusiast I was in those days, when I literally could not write anything but a weird yarn. However, my enthusiasm did not drive me to writing belittling letters about the work of some weird writer whose approach was not to my taste.

The hodge-podge of so-called "science" in science-fiction is certainly pathetic. I mean, taking it seriously is pathetic. Because there's no science, not a damn trace of real science, in a carload of s-f. Why not consider the stuff, honestly, frankly, as entertaining whimsy, some of it worth while and well done, some of it sheer tripe, and let it go at that--enjoy much of it, but not make a cult of any of it? And quit crapping yourself about "thought-variants" (a one-time shibboleth) and the science content--there ain't any. Not that I am a scientist--hell, I am merely a B.S., and they have Ph.D.'s writing for s-f mags. But I have a rudimentary acquaintance with science.

I like a science-fiction yarn when it is a good yarn; I like it because it is well done as a piece of story-telling, and not just because it has a dribble of science-so-called. After all, if I want some science, why not get a textbook on some branch of science and then sweat it out? Science-fiction, I think, is a hell of a lot more fun if you regard it frankly and honestly as make-believe, let's-play, just-suppose--the same way in which you read The Arabian Nights, Alice in Wonderland (a satire, by the way), or Candide. It'd seem silly to me to enter into ponderous scientific speculations about Alice's gambolings about, and try to devise some "law" of nature which "logically" permitted some of her experiences.

Atmosphere unnecessary to a story? Hell, how can you do a yarn without atmosphere? You can do a composition having a plot and no atmosphere, but is it a story? The big fallacy lies in trying to dissect a yarn. A story is an entity. Take a lot of anatomical parts and assemble them; does that give you a human being? A story is not simply so many parts plot, such-and-such percentage atmosphere, such-and-such amount of characterization, and so many percent theme. Any more than a strip-tease queen is summed up in such-and-such hip measure, such-and-such bust, etc.

Atmosphere, characterization, mood, plot, theme are so inextricably linked that you can't separate them as an assayer breaks down an ore specimen. They are all aspects of the same entity. True, some yarns devote more space to atmosphere and less to plot, and so forth in

permutations and combinations. The predominance of one aspect and the subordination of the other aspects is not a matter of rule but rather a matter of what effect does the author desire, and what purpose does he wish to achieve? Whichever aspect-dominance best achieves his purpose is certainly the best one. But no two stories can or ought to have any arbitrarily assigned aspect-dominance.

The only answer to this matter of proportioning the "aspects" is this: it depends on your narrative purpose. The only time when one can be definite in condemnation is when a writer has, to the point of absurdity, squelched one of the aspects. He can suppress and emphasize within wide limits. If he knows his business, he knows just how and what and how much to suppress and to emphasize and over-emphasize to get a "true" and valid story-entity. If he does not know his business, that is, if he lacks the instinct of dramatic rightness, all his babble about proportions is like a madman laughing into a well. He should stick to mathematics or something precise, and avoid pursuits where intuition dominates.

But please do convince your pals that there is absolutely no such thing as novelty of plot. All plots are banal and hackneyed. The personality of the characters is what carries a story; that, and suspense, arising not so much from wondering how it'll turn out, as from participating in the nature of the viewpoint-character to such an extent that the reader shares the hero's emotions through his sympathy for a fellow-human.

My best stories--that is, those sold for the most money, or sold to the more esteemed magazines, or those longest remembered by readers and friends--have been stories utterly lacking in plot novelty. What these stories did have was: (a) striking personalities, (b) colorful atmosphere, and (c) a theme whose truth and effectiveness had considerable in common with the Joe Doakes reader's daily life and problems.

I am always interested in glancing at a fan magazine, but it is only fair to confess that I do not keep in touch with the fan world. I wrote for Diablerie for fun and to humor Bill Watson, whose kind invitation to attend a conclave had to be declined. I've written just 25 weird yarns since "Spanish Vampire". Not many--and only that and "Apprentice Magician" and "Khosru's Garden" appeared in Weird Tales. Since May 1932 I have done but 69 fantasy yarns; since my start in 1924, just a bit short of 100, including collaborations. Of my total of 454 yarns, about 430 were done professionally, that is, since May 1932. Of professional stuff: 69 fantasies, 62 westerns, 137 adventures, and 131 detectives; the rest are miscellaneous. So you see why, perforce, I am not in touch with the fan world. Fantasy is a sort of hobby with me; I write a fantasy yarn only when I feel that fantasy is the ideal medium for a theme, or to depict some personality or situation. I don't write a fantasy just to be writing a fantasy (I used to do that, in 1932-33, until I got mortally sick of my own stuff!).

I am not remotely interested in fandom's classifyings, dogmatic cries, awards of crowns of dung and wreaths of orchids. To me, fantasy is something to enjoy, rather than to make into a cult. I enjoy writing. Why should I limit my writing to just one field? I meet all kinds of people, I've travelled considerably; I've moved in so many strata of life, I have so many interests, that I simply could not cramp myself to doing just fantasy or just any other one kind of fiction. Doing nothing but fantasy is almost inconceivable! I can hardly imagine living all these years and seeing the world only in terms of cosmic terror, or as a setting for Gothic yarns, or in terms of science-fiction. As for those who can and do, all power to them.

On the other hand, I do not by any means dismiss the fans with a



shrug. They are fellows who think along lines which I from time to time consider intently. We share a common taste. They are customers. But for their interest in fantasy--they, the great group of fans and mere purchasers--there'd have been nearly 100 yarns I could never have sold.

I do not contribute fiction to fan mags, simply because writing a story is work, not merely splashing something off. And when I work, I expect to get paid. I can do only one grade of work: my best--that is, my best at that moment, and with respect to that theme or subject. My best brings an appreciable sum from a commercial publisher. Frankly I couldn't afford to hand a fan mag a MS. for which I can get, via return mail, \$100 or \$200 or \$300. No fan mag editor would expect me to hand him even a \$50 MS., though these days I don't warm up a typewriter for less than \$100. As for dishing out a reject--no. If it were good, it would have sold for cash. If it's not worth selling, it's not worth anyone's acceptance as a gift.

True, I do write essays for fan mags. That is different. No problem of drama and structure is involved. It's relaxation, hobby writing, a bus-man's holiday! I enjoy it--in limited amounts.

A motor-racing fan mag--of all things, but why not?--once asked me if I had any motor-racing rejects. Oddly, I did have. I've followed racing, I've written articles on motoring, and fiction on racing. One bounced. But I turned the man down. If it wasn't good enough to sell, then it wasn't good enough to give away. Months later, a salvage editor bought it--cut rate, of course. But it was, after all, worth paying for. Fiction writing, while fun, is also work. Essays--well, that essay on rum in Diablerie: fun doing it, relaxation, done after dinner, when I was burned out and couldn't write fiction. I did it instead of spending an hour in the darkroom tinkering with cameras. That very same kind of copy, not one bit better, not one bit worse, used to bring me \$50 on the barrel head, in the days when I fooled around writing articles. For that matter, I sold some technical photographic articles last year, lost money on them, but did it just for fun. Bill Watson kindly said my article on rum was good enough for Esquire. While I've never sold to Esquire, Bill was just about right. I have sold such copy to mags which had the Esquire approach--but-varied, and came close to Esquire rates.

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## DARK GARDEN

(For Clark Ashton Smith)

There was an autumn garden once; strange flowers  
Swooned by the paths, and yews archaic dreamed  
Through endless twilights where no peacock screamed  
His agony to mark the fading hours.  
Here was my home; among these crumbling bowers  
I lay by silent pools whose waters seemed  
The timeless mirrors of a world that gleamed  
In tarnished beauty, swayed by ourious powers.

No other walked the garden, and no sound  
Provoked the echoes of that brooding air  
Where fruit hung heavy; knowing grief nor care  
I dreamed until that bitter hour found  
Beneath dark-rotting leaves a mouth which bled--  
And I awoke and knew that I was dead.

---Richard Ely Morse

(Reprinted by permission from The Californian, Fall 1936.)

# THE SMALL, DARK THING

by Duane W. Rimel

-oOo-

"Come down to earth, man. Corpses don't go about stabbing people to death, least of all with needles."

I coughed and rustled the sheets of manuscript. When Russel Sanders observed that I was serious, his smile faded. He took out his pipe and loaded it.

We were seated in my study that cool spring evening. The table between us displayed several sheets of yellow paper covered with long-hand, and two newspaper clippings.

"I didn't mean precisely that, Sanders. But I do think Carver had his revenge on Bullit, even though Carver was buried two weeks before Bullit died. And I think Carver was there himself...."

"I don't believe in ghosts, Andy."

"Perhaps you won't have to when you read this diary. I found it among Carver's belongings (which went to me according to his will) in his lake-side cabin at Waha, where he was discovered the twentieth of May. His body had a large, unhealed scar on its right side, below the ribs. The first clipping tells about that.

"Incidentally, the doctors weren't sure what he died of. The second clipping gives an account of Bullit's death. Both have curious aspects, as you will notice when you read them. Doctor Bullit was found in his garage about two a. m., barely a week ago. He had been stabbed all over, as if by a long needle or hat-pin.

"Now I want you to read Carver's diary and see if you think the way I do. Perhaps I'm prejudiced because he and I were such fast friends. I want to get your candid opinion."

Sanders gathered up the yellow sheets and began to read.

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May 2, 1940---Clara has announced our engagement, and I am as happy as any mortal ever was, save for that one shadow which hovers between us--that thing with which I am accursed. I am afraid to tell her about it. Of all my friends, Anderson is the only one who knows. My parents did, of course, but they're gone forever. It is fortunate they never saw me grow up....

I must have an operation before we are married--that is vital. But I am afraid of that, too. The conflict is giving me the jitters. It must be done. Bullit says the removal will be simple. The mechanics of the operation should be easy for a surgeon of his remarkable ability, but he doesn't understand the psychological phases of the situation. He doesn't realize how attached I've become to it these long years, how much a part of my very being it really is. For all I know the thing may contain a segment of my very soul. I cannot say; I am no doctor or magician.

Have an appointment with Bullit tomorrow. I am afraid he will insist on an operation immediately, if I am to be completely well by the last of June.

May 3---Went to Bullit's office, and he gave me the ultimatum. It has to be done very soon. Tomorrow it will be over, and with the grace of God, I'll begin the first instalment in my book of future happiness.

It will seem strange living without that thing. And I am afraid the removal will leave a scar, perhaps more psychic than physical. It is worth the risk, however. Bullit should know if anyone does. He says it isn't really alive; merely an abnormal growth. He says there is no secret or mysterious bond between the thing and me. I



hope and pray that he is right....

Out with Clara all evening. We saw "The Hunchback of Notre Dame", and later we sat in my car talking and planning until the small hours. She's knocked me for a loop, all right! Plans to keep her job for a while, at least. I wasn't wild about that, but I suppose it's quite the proper arrangement these days. My income is irregular, and my apartment isn't large enough for two.

May 4---Well, it's done! I'm not sick or giddy, as I expected. Bullit gave me a local, and had the job finished within twenty minutes. He's good. I told him to throw the thing in the furnace, and he promised me he would. True, I lost some blood, but less than I anticipated. I must be careful for a week or so, until the wound begins to heal.. Finished the first draft of my long African novel, and retouched a short story. I'm very pleased with my friend's surgery...perhaps I exaggerated the dire consequences of my situation. I shall know more about that a month from now.

Heavy date with Clara again tomorrow night. I told her I wasn't feeling well today. Bullit says I can go about as usual, provided I don't wrench or twist my abdomen. Now, thank God! I shan't have to tell Clara; she will never know there was a thing wrong with me. I feel five years younger! Best frame of mind for months. When she called tonight, I had to lie about my health, but Doc says I'd better stay home and rest. He admires Clara, tells me I'm getting a swell girl. He doesn't know the half of it!

May 5---Worked hard all morning. Went out with Clara in the evening. I didn't feel well, so we came home early. Twinges of pain in my right side. Healing reaction, I suppose. First operation I ever had, barring tonsils, and the relapse isn't pleasant. Two o'clock a. m. and still no sleep....

May 6---Felt tired and listless all morning, and in the afternoon went to see Bullit, although I wasn't scheduled to return so soon. He changed the bandage, and said the place is healing nicely, and there's no occasion for worry. He gave me some Nembutal tablets, and I hope I can sleep tonight. Called off going over to Clara's; she was disappointed. Can't help it if I don't feel right.... Should get busy on that short story about Mesmerism. Note: look up information at the library.

May 8---Stayed home Tuesday, napping and reading and walking the floor. Very little sleep the last two nights. And very strange dreams. I know it's silly, but I dreamed I was seeing through the eyes of a very small creature, like a rat or gopher. Must forget these morbid fancies and take a walk. Have shelved the Mesmeric story, which I'm afraid was the cause of the odd visions.

Clara was over a while this evening and wanted to take me for a drive; said the night air would do me good. I refused. We had an argument.... It was my fault, curse the luck! I was in an ugly mood--quite out of character with me. Told her about my dreams, and she said I'd better quit writing those wild, macabre stories. I flared up and told her I'd write whatever I damn well pleased. She flounced out of the apartment, calling back that she didn't intend to marry a pale-faced dreamer....

How utterly insane one becomes in an argument! I can't explain my sudden temper. I'll try to see her tomorrow and smooth out the wrinkles, if possible. I'm really not myself these days, and often I feel as if my mind were partly unhinged. Of course, I know better than that. I must see Bullit tomorrow. I hope those accursed dreams won't haunt me again. I can scarcely sleep at all.

May 9---At noon I 'phoned Clara's favorite lunch counter, but she wasn't there. I headed for Bullit's hospital, and met Clara coming out

of the same building. She stared at me queerly and kept on walking. I seized her arm and turned her around. I caused a scene, but I wasn't going to be put off any longer. It was either one thing or the other. I asked her, in a polite manner, to forgive me. She quibbled and side-stepped. She gave me no direct answer. Then I accused her of visiting Bullit. She flared back so hotly I knew I had struck the truth. She said she could go to a doctor any time she pleased, and that as far as she was concerned our engagement was off. I told her that was jake with me. She snatched off the ring and slammed it on the pavement. The diamond broke from its setting and rolled, like a mocking eye of Satan, across the sidewalk. I watched it splash in the gutter, and, turning my back on Clara and the curious long-necked mob, staggered into the hospital, so enraged I could scarcely see.

I didn't visit Bullit. Went to the Idle-Hour bar and drank myself into a stupor. Larson brought me home and dumped me in bed. I slept well--the first time since that damned operation. I'm beginning to think it was all a huge mistake. I shall see Bullit tomorrow....

May 10---More wild dreams last night--they're driving me wild. Bullit says I'm just upset because Clara and I had a little falling out. The gossip seems to have floated around very swiftly. Bullit was quite smug and pleased with himself as he dressed my wound and tried to soothe my nerves. I wonder just how well Clara and Alfred Bullit know one another.... Not that it matters any more. Curse her scheming little soul! I love her and hate her at the same time. Is that possible? I don't know. We're through--that is final.

Bullit says the wound isn't healing as it should, but predicts that another week will see me in good health and spirits. He reminded me again about exercise and fresh air. Rings under my eyes aren't encouraging.

Something Bullit said reminded me of my story, and I told him I had been unable to find any reliable reference books on Mesmerism and telepathy, and asked him where I might obtain some. The question rather startled him. He said he possessed a few, and offered to let me use them. I accepted gladly. Perhaps I can settle down and write a few pages tonight.

During the course of our conversation I told Bullit about my dreams. He laughed and said I worried too much, adding that they were probably due to some obscure psychological attackment I'd had for the missing protuberance.

May 12---Mother's Day. Went to church wearing my usual white carnation.... I can't bear this town life any longer. I'm going up to my cabin at Lake Waha, where I may get some rest and peace of mind. Now I'm dreaming about Clara day and night. Can't write a thing. Seem to have lost all powers of concentration. Mind needs a rest. Too many emotional upheavals lately. Must get away for a while. Making arrangements and doing necessary packing today.

May 16---Established in my cabin at last. Told the postmaster at the resort to hold all mail and communications for a week. I need complete isolation. Must battle this out alone. Went for a long walk today and visited many old picnic spots and swimming holes. More poignant memories of Clara, who used to share with me these scenic delights. Very few tourists about, owing to cold weather. Early yet for the main flock.

Tried a new story, but gave it up. Restless; cursed with insomnia and bad dreams. Last night (first evening here) I had more disturbing visions and woke several times in a cold sweat. Wound is healing slowly. It throbs and burns whenever I move. However, I think another week here will see me entirely well. Mountains are beautiful this time of year. More Lilies of the Valley than I ever saw before so early in



the season. If I can believe the store-keeper, the bass fishing is good. Need a drink. Lucky I brought a case of bourbon.

May 17---Drank myself asleep last night and felt terrible all day. Dreams are becoming more gruesome. I really can't explain them. I haven't touched those books Bullit gave me. And I've left the story alone. First I dreamed of floating through the air, far above the ground, a disembodied spirit. But the Universe was not mine---I was fettered and trapped; moved utterly by forces from without. Later came that odd second sight: seeing through the eyes of some tiny creature. The recurrence of this particular dream is arousing a hideous fear and suspicion. There must be a definite reason for these dreams, and I think I know what it is....

My theory is fantastic. I must forget it and take a walk. Sunlight is fading, but I have plenty of time. A bit of fresh air may revive me.

I've been thinking about Doctor Bullit. Why has he been so interested in Mesmerism and telepathy? Among his books I have seen, too, a few pamphlets on hypnotism.

I suppose he and Clara are keeping company now. Curse them both! When I get well, I'll go back and tell them off.

May 18---Had a terrible night. Didn't walk far yesterday evening, because dark came too quickly. A strange phenomenon--I was never afraid of the dark before. Childish nonsense. The cool mountain air refreshed me somewhat, but a few hours later I felt as bad as ever.

Went to bed about midnight. Rolled and tossed for ages. Took some sleeping tablets and eventually fell into a half-coma. Dreamed again, and this time the vision was shocking indeed. I hesitate to write all of it.... My original suspicion is strengthened, and I am afraid that my days are numbered--

I dreamed again of seeing through the eyes of another; and where before I had simply been aware of my predicament, this time I actually beheld objects that were horribly familiar. When I opened my eyes in that unfamiliar dream-world, within that small body, I had a glimpse of a shiny operating room in Bullit's hospital, and I saw his round, fat face leering down at me. Then I thought I saw him laugh. And God help me!--beyond him stood Clara, dark and lovely as ever. I saw him move toward her. That image is seared upon my brain forever. Clara in Bullit's arms, returning his fervent kisses and caresses....

And it seemed that I crouched on a low table, within a body that was small and dark and hideous....

I awoke screaming and clawing the air. I haven't slept since. I'm afraid that what I dreamed may possess a shadow of reality! The wonders of the mind are as yet unexplored, and time and space seem to mean very little.... If what I fear is happening, I may not live very long.

I cannot go to sleep now; must not. The morning of another day has come, and I feel weary and giddy and estranged from my surroundings: the small room, camp-chairs, and narrow cot. More whiskey...but even that will not dim the horror or let me forget.

Must go out and breathe fresh air. I wish Anderson were here--he might be able to help. I hope he hasn't gone to Seattle. Thoughts are chaotic; mind wanders incessantly.

One thing is certain--if ever I get on my feet again, I shall kill that fiend...kill him no matter what the price. He promised to burn that thing...he snatched my dearest possession, and now I think he has yoked me with a singular and hideous curse that I despair of escaping. But I shall have revenge! Damn his black heart....

Sanders dropped the last sheet of manuscript and fumbled in his jacket for his pipe. A sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he

seized the clipping which gave the detailed account of Bullit's death. He read it twice and dropped it as if the entire episode had an unpleasant odor.

He cleared his throat. "You know, Anderson, it's very strange. The newspaper says that Bullit didn't die immediately. He was taken to a hospital, where he screamed and raved about some thing coming to life and chasing him, haunting his every footstep. Some small, dark thing....

"And by the way, you say you knew Carver well. Did you ever see that--thing on his side? What did it look like?"

I didn't answer right away. I lit another cigaret. "Yes, and it wasn't a nice sight. I saw it one time, as he guessed, when he passed out, and I had to undress him and put him to bed. I'd say it was a sort of deformed 'Siamese twin' that just never developed normally."

Our eyes met across the table. We never mentioned the subject again.

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#### EDITORIALLY SPEAKING. (Concluded from page 2)

or critical in nature. While we have several pieces along these lines promised to us, at the moment we have practically nothing of this nature actually on hand. Can you help us?....Before he went into the army, Dalvan Coger started a hard-cover checklist of Frank Owen; if any of you are in a position to finish it up, please let us know, and we will send you his notes....We also need good poetry; fiction, however, is desired only by arrangement....The next issue is rather nebulous at the moment; however, it will be highlighted by another short-short by Anthony Boucher, something or other by Lovecraft, and will probably feature stories by R. H. Barlow and Fritz Leiber, Jr. The cover will be by Howard Wandrei.

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## SATAN'S HOLE

Evil spawns in the shallows at Satan's Hole  
Where man meets the Devil to sell his soul.  
Bend the knee quickly, and say a prayer...  
They never return who linger there.

The chasm is wide, and the pool is deep.  
From under the waters, shadows leap.  
Can those be rocks which leer and stare?  
They never return who linger there.

Bats dart low in the dim half-light.  
The wail of a banshee is heard, and Fright,  
Vulture-like, swoops through the dank, foul air...  
They never return who linger there.

Shrill blows the wind, sobbing and sighing.  
Voices lament, moaning and crying.  
A werewolf howls from his hidden lair...  
They never return who linger there.

Slow-dripping water--or is it the sound  
Of globules of blood from an open wound?  
Pass the spot swiftly--beware, beware...  
They never return who linger there.

---Rita Barr





Rah

UNWANTED DESIRE

# FANTASY FORUM

Under the new regime of The Acolyte, this popular feature will be resumed. Frankly, there was a difference of opinion on the matter; Editor Laney dislikes to use space for readers' letters when these pages could be used for actual articles, Editor Russell on the other hand is a staunch believer in this department, and the reader reaction definitely gives Sam's views preponderance. However, we will not bother to compile ratings. If you folks want this department to continue, it is up to you to give us letters of a nature we can use. FTL-SDR.

---oOo---

THOMAS O. MABBOT, the well-known Poe authority, writes from New York:

...I do not think that Lovecraft was much of a poet. He differed from Poe in that--for EAP was primarily a poet, and even the tales, grand as they are, were not, in my opinion, what his heart primarily desired. And after twenty years and more of study, there is the subject I know enough about to have an opinion. But the only poem of HPL that really gets me is the song in The Tomb; it is the best imitation of the 18th century I have ever read, and the line "Better under the table than under the ground" is magnificent. But Lovecraft I think at bottom loved his prose work. And I feel with Leonardo da Vinci that only what one wishes to do can ever be one's finest work.

I think I was the first academic person to review HPL, and I have no objection to telling you that it is one of the things I am proudest of. But there is a corollary to it--Lovecraft involves my greatest regret. I taught at Brown (Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island --eds.) in 1928-9, and was often no doubt within 50 feet of him. And I had once had a hint that one might write to him without offence. But I did not know -- and I never saw him with knowledge, and I never wrote him. He made one great contribution to pure scholarship -- for he got the whole point of Poe's House of Usher, which in print was not done to my knowledge before he wrote. I mention it only in passing -- but my respect for him includes respect for his criticism.

I have never quite been sure how great he was; though I do feel he was a great writer. But I know one thing; his fiction shares an honor with the works of Poe and Chatterton. They are the only authors of whom I can honestly say that I enjoyed every word of their fiction, and I have read all easily available of all three. Now my honest philosophy about literature is this -- in a world such as I have from boyhood perceived this one to be, the literature of escape is to my mind of the greatest value. As for morals -- that is all right, and I'm all for it, but one can get all the pure moralising any man needs from the E cheridion of Epictetus, and maybe a bit of Walt Whitman. When people ask me what to read, I answer if they seek moral improvement I recommend those two authors. For the rest, what is harmless and makes this a more pleasant world is what I value.

----ooOoo----

BURTON CRANE, newspaper man and playwright, considers the last issue from his office at the New York Times:

I like your stuff a lot, and wish I knew more of the field about which you write. Hoffman's account of the visits to Smith was amusing and good but, it seemed to me, needed just a shade more exaggeration than he gave it. He had an excellent conception, but didn't quite carry it through. -- The House At The End of The Road could have been much more powerful; all Banister had to do was to build up the menace. The menace, of course, was the Roosian bitch who wanted to marry Ward. It wouldn't have been hard to give her an almost hypnotic power over him: in her presence he can't wrench his mind from her physical attri-



butes, even while his mind keeps telling him that she is a cold little chiseler who wants only his money. The growth of this obsession with the way the Roosian swims inside her clothes, etc., would give the story the narrative progress it needs and which the author has tried to give it by repetitious returns to the gal Ward finally recognises as Death. It would also give a dramatic build-up. The Roosian wouldn't have to get him to propose in an attack of amnesia. In fact, the real edge of the story could be made to cut in the present. Now it is smothered in the past. (The editors interrupt: This is all very well, but had the story been handled as you suggest, we question if it would have come under the heading of fantasy. This of course would have made no difference, but the thought occurred to us in passing.....Also, while we have the floor, we should like to mention that, while The Acolyte's old taboo against "I liked this; I didn't like that" will remain in force, we will from now on publish occasional comments on the contents of previous issues--provided they come under the heading of constructive criticism. FTL-SDR)

-----ooOoo-----

Sgt. R. A. HOFFMAN, Acolyte art editor, reports from "Somewhere in Texas" on his visit to the home of Lilith Lorraine, noted poet:

...I visited San Antonio, which I found to be a primitive, degenerate town, and telephoned Lilith Lorraine, mentioning that CAS had insisted I look her up....She and her husband met me in their car, and drove me out to their Shrine (Avalon Poetry Shrine. --eds.). As we entered the grounds, I heard the barking of what seemed to be myriad dogs, though it turned out to be only three--two of them Russian wolf and the other a crossbreed between Russian wolf and spitz. All were beautiful creatures and very friendly. Inside I was startled to find a veritable menagerie. A large parrot was quietly perched inside its huge cage which sat on the floor, and two cats were snarling at each other. They also have a monkey, but it was asleep in bed at the time, though later she brought it out.

Miss Lorraine is a most amazing person, and going out there was a most fascinating adventure. She and her husband have been married 33 years, but she says she is all the time receiving love letters from strangers. She prefers her pen-name so much that even her husband calls her Miss Lorraine sometimes! They are both native Texans, and she is complete with drawl and all. She has a charming personality and a fine sense of humor.

I had only 2½ hours before my bus, and every minute was spent in incessant conversation or in listening to Lilith read us some of her verse. She read me selections from her then as yet unpublished book, The Day of Judgement (Banner Press, 1944), and I was completely caught in her spell, totally swept away with them. She showed me the shrine itself, and the sunken garden, though unfortunately it was late at night, and the floodlights did not give the proper perspective we would have desired....Miss Lorraine thinks CAS the finest American poet since Poe....

-----ooOoo-----

WILLIS E. HURD, President of the AMERICAN JULES VERNE SOCIETY, writes from Arlington, Virginia:

A few years ago I had an article in Hobbies Magazine (Aug.1936) entitled, A Collector and His Jules Verne...Then I began receiving replies from other Verne fans...I met James C. Iraldi, leading Verne fan, in a bookshop in Boston...Meanwhile other collectors wrote me, and eventually I had a considerable correspondence, some of it centering around New York. One day I broached the subject of a Society, just to cement us seven or eight collectors into a solid mass, and with no other particular purpose in mind. We set on the date of May 20, 1940



...there were six of us when we organized, with myself as president, James C. Iraldi as secretary-historian, and Nat Bengis as vice-president and treasurer. The following day, the New York Times gave us a brief notice and as a result of that we heard from Lloyd V. Jacquet, editor of Funnies, Inc., and shortly after added him to our membership as editor. That October we had a meeting in New York for the purpose of strengthening our ties, and to consider the publication of a bulletin which we wanted in the exact size and format of the fine old Paris editions of Verne's works issued by the Hetzel Cie. The three New York members put a lot of time into plans, actually preparing plates and cover designs. We furnished several manuscripts, and seemed in a fair way to get out a bulletin that would be a pride to any collector. But the cost was going to be pretty steep for so few of us to carry, and although by that time we had raised our membership to 14, things dragged. Then came the war. The house of Funnies, Inc. was deluged with work, and in addition the war called our editor to Casablanca, Morocco, where he is now American vice-consul. Meanwhile we took in a former member of the Societe Francaise de Jules Verne, a French Pere living in the Gaspé country, Quebec; and contacted another member of the Societe then living in Amsterdam....While we sought for and obtained members (added two this year), our lack of activity forbade our soliciting too strenuously. Nevertheless, we have a fee for joining--\$3 in advance for application and the first year's dues. It has given us a small sum in the treasury which we hope may some day be applied to a bulletin as originally planned. (Interested readers of the Acolyte are urged to write Mr. Hurd at 3500 22nd St., N, Arlington, Virginia. --FTL-SDR.)

-----ooOoo-----

AUGUST DERLETH, well-known author, gives a thumb-nail sketch of his current activities:

...Weird Tales took three new shorts: A Gentleman from Prague, The Inverness Cape, and Pacific 431; and Good Housekeeping took a long-time favorite, McCrary's Wife. As a matter of fact, I now have just one unsold weird short at the moment, and no time to do any more--not even the sequel to The Trail of Cthulhu, which is being demanded. WT still has The Dweller In Darkness, as you know. (This novelette is in the Cthulhu mythos. FTL) I am in the midst of a lengthy revision of my long novel for Fall, The Shield of the Valiant. I wrote it originally as New Moon Over, in 150,000 words; and I am adding to it another 75,000 words, I think, as it now looks. It is swelling and growing literally beyond all bounds, and it seems to be good, for it writes itself easily. But then, I am just putting more meat on the skeleton, and that is not too difficult. Then I must do new pieces for Redbook, Good Housekeeping, and Life Story...WT now has enough, Fantastic Adventures has one (Carousel), and all in all my usual markets see well enough supplied. Just tonight finished reading proof on the new Judge Peck mystery, Mischief In The Lane, coming out in August or September...And, as you no doubt saw in WT, Arkham House is ready to go on the Wandrei collection, The Eye and The Finger.

-----ooOoo-----

SARA BORSCHOW, fast-rising young Texas poet, was one of three co-winners in EMBERS' 1943 poetry contest, and as a result will be published in book form. The anthology, Three Prophets on Pegasus, is obtainable for \$1.50 from Verservice, Batavia, New York...In the future, she wishes to use the penname Rita Barr on all her work...We culled the foregoing from several of Miss Borschow's letters, and in addition, quote the following verbatim:

"...I'm giving The Acolyte acknowledgement as original publisher in Three Prophets on Pegasus. Am using one entire fantasy section,



and Drums of Death, The Haunted House, and Satan's Hole will all appear in it."

-----ooOoo-----

E. HOFFMAN PRICE, leading magazine author, droops a postcard:

See Walter Duranty's autobiographical novel, Search For A Key (Simon & Schuster, 1943), p. 80 "Nodens, the God of Chaos, and the Dweller on the Threshold". Query: is this entity (or these entities, the context does not make clear whether Nodens is God of Chaos and also Dweller on the Threshold, or whether the author means: Nodens, and the Dweller on the Threshold.)--so, is this entity an HPL creation which Walter Duranty picked as a bit of color for an (auto)biographical reminiscence, or did WD and HPL draw on a common source? That is, are we right in the assumption that Nodens originated with HPL? Also, on p. 148, Duranty says: "Nodens and the Chaos, the power of the Abyss." HPL says Lord of the Great Abyss, and implies that It is benevolent. WD, on the other hand, states that It is malignant. I've read nothing else of Duranty's. His first book, 1935; 2nd, 1937; 3rd, 1938. Maybe you'd care to trace this Nodens business?

-----ooOoo-----

BASIL DAVENPORT, well-known literary critic and authority on weird fiction, airmails from "c/o Postmaster, New York":

In connection with Lovecraft, I have just come across a reference which may interest you. It is in Far-Off Things, by Arthur Machen--a book of reminiscences, not fiction. In writing of the landscape of his childhood, he says (p. 19 of the English edition) "Caerwent, also a Roman city, was buried in the earth, and gave up now and again strange relics--fragments of the temple of 'Nodens, god of the depths'."

Machen seems to make Nodens a genuine deity of ancient Rome, though in fairly wide Latin reading I don't remember to have met him. If I were within the reach of a library, I should look up the word in Harper's Dictionary of Classical Antiquities. It is possible that you may have this reference already; naturally, I have not your glossary with me--if not, you may find this worth exploring, even if it leads no farther than to Machen himself.

-----ooOoo-----

(Search in several dictionaries of classical antiquities and encyclopedias of Roman mythology has failed to reveal any mention of Nodens, so we must appeal to our readers for further clues to the origin of this mysterious deity. SDR-FTL.)

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MILTON RAOUL MILLS, a critical reader as yet untainted by fandom, gives with criticism from (of all places!) Hamilton, Montana:

...I was disappointed with Lovecraft's Shadow; you labeled it a "version", but when I read it, it turned out to be only a fragment. How can you be so deceitful? Now I shall never know who made those exotic jeweled ornaments...CAsmith's Amor seems by far the best poem in this number; the other verse lamentably lacks technique...Mimeographing does not lend itself to the fine arts very well, so one cannot say much for the pictures reproduced in that medium; the cover litho was very attractive, and the WSmith insert would undoubtedly be first-class anywhere and at any time...I don't know why Nanek's 5th Column was worth printing; but I thought the critical review of John Metcalfe was well done, and perhaps the most intellectual bit in the issue. I was surprised to learn that Metcalfe is the husband of Evelyn Scott, as she is one of my favorite novelists; indeed, I just finished reading her Background in Tennessee.... All in all, it's an interesting magazine, with values that are probably beyond the ken of a practical person like myself.

ANTHONY BOUCHER, prominent author and reviewer, puts in his bit from Berkeley, California:

...Lovecraft's influence has never worked on me especially--my few attempts have been abortions. In fact, I largely disagree with him in theory, no matter how much I like what he achieved in practice. I will maintain to the death that the only true horror is that of understatement (I am basically an MRJames man); and it annoys me, as a theorist, that both Poe and HPL managed to attain horror by explicit overstatement. For even HPL's cryptic, allusive manner is not true understatement. He simply makes nameless and indescribable and unmentionable into very definite connotative namings and descriptions and mentions.

I'm afraid that much of the Lovecraftiana you mention doesn't markedly stimulate my salivary glands. My feelings on HPL are mixed. They're best described by comparing them to those of a Baker Street Irregular. I can speak only for myself, but I feel that most of the BSI would agree with me in considering Sir Arthur Conan Doyle a singularly dull and stuffy gentleman who happened to transcribe the immortal Canon of Baker Street. From what I know of Doyle, particularly from his autobiography, nothing could tempt me less than unpublished letters of his--unless they happened to deal in some manner with the Holmes saga. And I think the same goes for HPL. As a man, he seems to me an overgrown prodigy, a man of extraordinary IQ and limited intellect. This is as superficial as it is heretical, and my opinion may well change. But for my money the fun in exploiting Lovecraft lies in further investigation of the Canon--the sort of thing that you did in your glossary.

The Cthulhu Mythos is one of the extraordinary imaginative achievements of our times, and I want to know everything I can about it. But I don't care much what HPL thought about life and manners and things. It is as the transcriber of the Myth that he looms incomparable.

-----ooOoo-----

AUGUST DERLETH just makes our deadline with an exciting announcement:

There appears to be a relaxation in paper restrictions as applying to small publishers like Arkham House; so I hasten to let you know that if there is indeed such a relaxation as the new order L-245 indicates--according to printer interpretation and my own--then Arkham House will publish by February 1945 four books, no less: The Eye and The Finger, by Donald Wandrei; Jumbie and Other Uncanny Tales, by Henry S. Whitehead; Lost Worlds, by Clark Ashton Smith; and Marginalia, by H. P. Lovecraft--at \$3.00 each. Fans are asked to place advance orders for all four books, plus \$2.60 for Sleep No More!, just as soon as possible. Will you spread the word as quickly as you can, so that I won't be strapped for dough to pay the printer.

Out Of Space And Time, by Smith, is now out of print, as I wrote that it soon would be...A Hodgson and a Howard collection will be coming along soon, probably in 1945; and my novel, The Trail of Cthulhu, in 1946.

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## A LAST-MINUTE EDITORIAL

by Samuel D. Russell

-oOo-

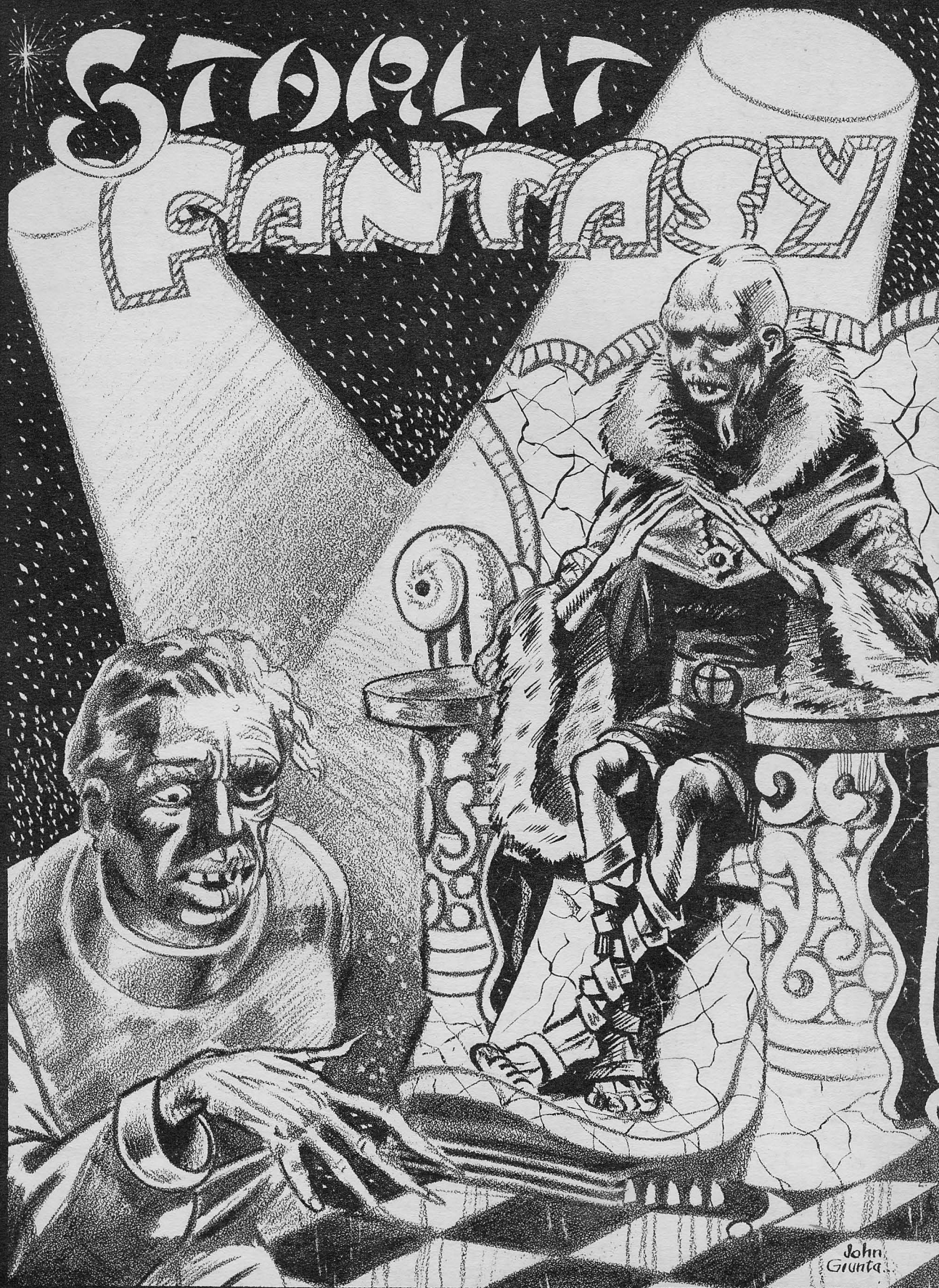
The above letter from Mr. Derleth is certainly the best news of the month for fantasy connoisseurs, and serves to remind us of what a splendid and unique work Arkham House is doing in the service of our favorite branch of literature. When Derleth and Wandrei brought out



The Outsider and Others five years ago, they had no way of knowing whether so risky a venture as a memorial volume of the pulp stories of an almost unknown weirdist might not mean simply throwing money down the drain; yet they spared no expense or effort in producing a fine, tasteful volume whose very jacket-blurbs were models of discriminating criticism and information. For a while it did seem as if most of the 1200 copies would only gather dust in the storeroom, as has many a similar edition-of-love in the history of publishing, but again its sponsors gambled that the literary worth of Lovecraft's fiction would create by word-of-mouth a constant though slow demand for the book, and proceeded with the publication of other collections of weird tales as fast as they could afford them. Now at last their faith is being justified by the steady sale of all their volumes, and they are in a position to go ahead on a greatly accelerated scale with a spate of books such as to make any fan's mouth water. When you remember that these stories from Weird Tales, which we know as classics in their field, would never be even considered by the regular publishing houses because of their uninhibited fantasy and lowly origin, and realise that their publication in book form would be far too expensive a project for any ordinary fantasy enthusiast, you begin to see what a fortuitous boon Arkham House is to all of us. Right now, when wartime wages give most of us a little more money than usual, seems an excellent time to back up Arkham House's publishing program to the limit with some hard cash to assure ourselves of getting these splendid volumes immediately upon publication. They won't lie around forever waiting to be picked up, you know, as many a dilatory fan has discovered in the case of the first Lovecraft and Smith books; and the longer you put off ordering your copies, the more likely you are to wait too long. There is no need, certainly, to persuade you of the worth of the Arkham House Fantasy Library, but an occasional reminder of the time element involved may perhaps be pardoned.

It is of great interest to note that in the case of Lovecraft the pioneering work of Arkham House has finally borne fruit in recognition by other publishers and anthologists. Last month Random House released the finest anthology of weird stories that has yet come to my notice in Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural, edited by Herbert A. Wise and Phyllis Fraser--a 1080-page, 52-story collection of what comes as close to being the best stories by the best authors as can reasonably be hoped for in view of legitimately divergent tastes in the field. The two concluding stories are Lovecraft's The Rats In The Walls and The Dunwich Horror, which unquestionably rank among his finest work; and a brief editorial introduction gives an admirable description of the nature of HPL's fiction. This book was followed only a couple of weeks later by a small, twenty-five cent, "pocket-book" collection of Lovecraft stories put out by Bartholomew House under the title of The Weird Shadow Over Innsmouth and Other Stories of the Supernatural, and containing, besides the title story: The Festival, He, The Outsider, and The Whisperer in Darkness. With the possible exception of He, none of these stories could possibly be classed as anything but first-rate, and the wide circulation that the book should be given in drug stores and like places throughout the country will do a great deal to spread recognition and appreciation for Lovecraft's work. Thus we see that the ripples from the first stone that Arkham House threw upon the waters of contemporary letters five years ago have not been without effect. Who can tell what their ultimate results may be? I don't think it is too far-fetched to suspect that we may be assisting at the birth of a small but significant new branch of modern literature.





John  
Giunta